

BACKGROUNDER

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF HOWARD PHILLIPS,

NINTENDO'S GAME MASTER

"So many of my friends dream about the days when they were young and didn't have to work. As much as we all complained about having to go to school, when it comes right down to it, kids have a terrific time.

"You realize that when you grow up, finish school, and enter the workforce, your time is increasingly impacted by work demands and family needs. More often than not, you have to schedule time to have fun.

"I guess I'm really one of the lucky ones. My job as Nintendo's Game Master is to have fun. I guess you would call it a dream job.

"I've always been a game-playing fan. I get excited not only about the notion of playing new and different games, but also in seeing the reactions of others who play them.

"That's an important part of what I do for Nintendo of America in Redmond, Washington -- watch others play and find out from them not only which games they enjoy, but what others they'd like to see on the market. In 1985, for example, I witnessed the growing popularity of Nintendo's "Super Mario Bros."^R home video game.

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Nintendo's Game Master
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It was the rage in Japan, where a best-selling 'how-to' book was written about it, and a feature film was created around its characters. The next thing I know, I'm responsible for the development of the U.S. arcade version of the Super Mario Bros. game.

"My day at work begins with a 15-mile commute, but I make it fun by driving a '66 Wildcat convertible. I may spend six hours out of an eight or nine-hour day actually playing different games. Nintendo is constantly evaluating new games designed by the company's game development experts in Japan, trying to determine how video game fans will react. Nintendo defines quality as a challenging game which features superb graphics and fast-paced screen action. I add the ultimate criterion -- the game has to be fun.

"I also spend quite a bit of time out of the office, traveling to video game arcades, where I study the players and how they interact with the games. I look at both our games and those of our competitors. Sometimes I ask questions of the players to see what they find most challenging or exciting about a particular game. That information makes its way back to Nintendo and is used to help us plan new games and video game equipment.

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Nintendo's Game Master
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"The time I spend with video game buffs is part of the reason why the company named me president of the 'Nintendo Fun Club,' a group of video game fans from across the country. Another way I stay in touch with Nintendo players is through my input as technical advisor to **Nintendo Power** magazine. And I have the pleasure of reading many letters from my 'fans.' I consider that an important part of my job, reading what other game players have to say or meeting them in person. They enjoy sharing their own experiences, playing tips and ideas for new games. I like that part of my job the best because that's why we're in business, to make sure people have fun.

"Game-playing can have a serious side to it. Players can improve hand-eye coordination, agility and strategic planning skills when playing video games. Also, kids can learn very quickly from video games, according to the publication **Science Digest**, because the feedback is direct and immediate. They benefit from seeing improvement, not only in gaining more points, but in uncovering hidden clues and bonuses.

"New video game technology is continually changing how we play video games, as well as who plays. For instance, players can take **Game Boy™** virtually anywhere, whereas before, they were confined to their home systems. In addition, more girls and adults are playing video games than ever before, and Nintendo is creating titles just for them.

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Nintendo's Game Master
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"As Nintendo's Game Master, I've played enough video games to become one of the top experts in the country. Fans of our system are constantly asking me to tell them the inside secrets of our games, because they know I was in on the development of so many of them. But even though I know these games inside and out, and have most of the secrets committed to memory, I still love to play, because it's never stopped being fun."

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